

ON THE TRUE BUDDHA

With Reverend Raido Hirota

Translated and edited by Udumbara Foundation volunteers

Question: Why does Nichiren Shoshu view Nichiren as the true Buddha? Why don't they recognize Shakyamuni as the true Buddha? At the end of Gongyo - from "*Ga yaku i se bu / ku so kugen sha. . .*" to "*Mai ji sa ze nen / i ga ryo shu jo / toku nyu mujo do / soku jo ju bushin*" ("I, ever knowing all beings, / Those who walk or walk not in the Way, / Expound their every Law / Ever making this my thought: / 'How shall I cause all the living / To enter the Way supreme / And speedily accomplish their Buddhahood?'" Doesn't this passage prove that Shakyamuni is the true Buddha? That he is the father of the world and not Nichiren?

Rev. Hirota (RH): Shakyamuni expounded the Lotus Sutra, but he did not put it into practice. What he put forth with the Lotus Sutra is comparable to a blueprint, but it is not the actual thing, or entity. It is theory not proof.

Nichiren Daishonin was not satisfied with understanding the Lotus Sutra for himself alone. His thought was to establish a way for all people to practice and reach enlightenment. Shakyamuni could only preach the Lotus Sutra, he could not practice it. Nichiren Daishonin not only preached it, he practiced it - he lived it - and put it into a practical form whereby all people could practice it and attain enlightenment. That is why Shakyamuni is a temporary or provisional Buddha and Nichiren Daishonin is the true Buddha. The last paragraph of the 16th chapter of the Lotus Sutra reads:

<i>Mai ji sa ze nen</i>	Ever making this my thought:
<i>I ga ryo shu jo</i>	How shall I cause all the living
<i>Toku nyu mujo do</i>	To enter the Way supreme
<i>Soku jo ju bushin</i>	And speedily accomplish their Buddhahood?

Shakyamuni could not find the way to accomplish this. Nichiren Daishonin did!

The central point of the above passage is the Law of *Namu-myoho-renge-kyo* and not the Buddha. *Namu-myoho-renge-kyo* is also in the center of the Gohonzon inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin. Having *Namu-myoho-renge-kyo* as the center of Gohonzon means that the source of our lives, the source of other living things, the source of all life is *Namu-myoho-renge-kyo*. Even the lives existing in the worlds of Hell, Hunger, Animality and Anger have *Namu-myoho-renge-kyo*. No matter what kind of life it is, for any life, no matter what world or what condition of life, to be able to realize *Namu-myoho-renge-kyo* is enlightenment.

As disciples of the Lotus Sutra, it is the Daishonin who shows us how to become enlightened, not Shakyamuni. Unlike the extraordinary figure of Shakyamuni, Nichiren Daishonin's life was the life of the Everyman. He felt the emotion of sadness; he endured suffering, pain, poverty, hunger and cold. And while he experienced what we ordinary people experience he still attained enlightenment. It is only the Daishonin who demonstrated how to attain enlightenment, not Shakyamuni. That is why the Daishonin is the true Buddha.

In the order of things, first there was the Law - *Myohorengekyo*. Later the Buddha came along and awakened to the Law. Then he transmitted what he had realized to the people. The Buddha did not create this world, nor does the Buddha, unlike God, ever say that he created the world. The Law is the same in the Buddha and the people.